

IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier listings and all earlier versions.

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1. (Currently Amended) A method for driving a solid image pickup device provided with pixels, each of the pixels comprising an photoelectric conversion part and output means for outputting a signal from the photoelectric conversion part, which method comprises the steps of:

dividing photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part during one unit of accumulation period[[,]]; and

reading out the photo-electric charges via the output means.

2. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein output signals obtained by the division and the readout are individually subjected to noise suppression processing and added to each other.

3. (Original) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein the output signals obtained by the division and the readout are individually retained and a horizontal scan is carried out after adding the output signals or while adding the output signals.

4. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein signals from the photoelectric conversion part is divided and read out from a plurality of output means.

5. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein a reset voltage is applied to the a charge-voltage conversion part of the output means to perform a reset operation so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted by one-time transfer operation.

6. (Currently Amended) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim ~~[[1]]~~ 5, wherein a reset voltage is set to a value which lowers a voltage value $V_{FD_{SAT}}$ of the charge-voltage conversion part below the depleting voltage V_{DEP} of the photoelectric conversion part corresponding to a saturated charge quantity Q_{SAT} of the photoelectric conversion part.

7. (Currently Amended) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, comprising:

a primary readout step₁ of reading out a part of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part of the output means so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted;

a reset step₁ of resetting the charge-voltage conversion part after the primary readout step; and

a final readout step₂ of reading out residual photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part so that the photoelectric conversion part is completely depleted after the reset step.

8. (Currently Amended) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, comprising:

a first reset step₁ of performing a reset by applying a reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part of the output means so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted by one-time transfer operation;

a primary readout step₁ of reading out a part of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part;

a second reset step₂ of resetting the charge-voltage conversion part after the primary readout step; and

a final readout step₂ of reading out residual photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part after the second reset step.

9. (Original) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein the output means comprises:

a semiconductor diffusion region;
a transistor for amplifying voltage signals generated in the semiconductor diffusion region;
a transfer gate for transferring a photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the semiconductor diffusion region; and
a reset switch for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the semiconductor diffusion region to perform a reset.

10. (Original) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 1, wherein the output means comprises:

a charge-voltage conversion part for converting charges from the photoelectric conversion part into voltage signals;
signal amplification means for amplifying the voltage signals generated in the charge-voltage conversion part;
charge transfer means for transferring photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part; and
reset means for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part to perform a reset.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for driving a solid image pickup device comprising a photoelectric conversion part, a charge-voltage conversion part for converting electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part into voltage signals,

signal amplification means for amplifying the voltage signals generated in the charge-voltage conversion part, charge transfer means for transferring photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and reset means for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part to perform a reset; which method comprises the steps of:

in a readout period, [[of]] reading out, from the photoelectric conversion part, photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part during one unit of accumulation period[[,]]; and

transferring a part of the photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and performing a primary readout operation of reading out output signals amplified by the amplification means to a signal output line[[,]]; and

then resetting the charge-voltage conversion part, transferring the rest of the photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and performing a final readout operation of reading out output signals amplified by the amplification means to the signal output line.

12. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 11, wherein the output signals divided and read out by the primary reading out operation and the final reading out operation are individually subjected to noise suppression processing and added to each other.

13. (Original) A method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 11, wherein the output signals divided and read out by the primary reading out operation and the final reading out operation are individually retained and a horizontal scan is performed after adding the output signals or while adding the output signals.

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14. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 11, wherein signals from the photoelectric conversion part are divided and read out from a plurality of output means.

15. (Withdrawn) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 11, wherein the reset voltage is set to a value which lowers a voltage value V_{FD_SAT} of the charge-voltage conversion part below the depleting voltage V_{DEP} of the photoelectric conversion part corresponding to a saturated charge quantity Q_{SAT} of the photoelectric conversion part.

16. (Original) The method for driving a solid image pickup device according to claim 11, wherein after the primary readout operation and before the final readout operation, at least one intermediate readout operation is performed by resetting the charge-voltage conversion part, transferring a part of the photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and reading out output signals amplified by the amplification means to the signal output line.

17. (Currently Amended) *A!* ~~[[The]]~~ A solid image pickup device provided with pixels, each of the pixels comprising a photoelectric conversion part and output means for outputting signals from the photoelectric conversion part, wherein a circuit is provided for dividing photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part during one unit of accumulation period and reading out the photoelectric charges via the output means.

18. (Withdrawn) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, further comprising a noise suppressing circuit for subjecting the output signals divided and read out to noise suppression processing, and an addition circuit for adding the output signals subjected to the noise suppression processing.

19. (Original) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, further comprising: a retention circuit for individually retaining the output signals divided and read out; and a scanning circuit for performing a scan after adding the output signals retained or while adding the output signals retained.

20. (Withdrawn) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, further comprising a plurality of transfer gates for dividing and reading out the output signals from the photoelectric conversion part.

21. (Withdrawn) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, further comprising a reset switch for applying a reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part of the output means so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted by one-time transfer operation, and performing a reset.

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22. (Currently Amended) The solid image pickup device according to claim [[17]] 21, wherein a reset voltage is set to a value which lowers a voltage value $V_{FD_{SAT}}$ of the charge-voltage conversion part below the depleting voltage V_{DEP} of the photoelectric conversion part corresponding to a saturated charge quantity Q_{SAT} of the photoelectric conversion part.

23. (Currently Amended) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, comprising a control circuit for control so as to perform:

a primary readout step₁ of reading out a part of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part of the output means so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted;

a reset step₂ of resetting the charge-voltage conversion part after the primary readout step; and

a final readout step₃ of reading out the rest of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part so that the photoelectric conversion part is completely depleted, after the reset step.

24. (Currently Amended) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, comprising a control circuit for control so as to perform:

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a first reset step₁ of performing a reset by applying a reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part of the output means so that the photoelectric conversion part is not completely depleted by one-time transfer operation;

a primary readout step₂ of reading out a part of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part;

a second reset step₃ of resetting the charge-voltage conversion part after the primary readout step; and

a final readout step₄ of reading out the rest of the photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part after the second reset step.

25. (Original) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, wherein the output means comprises:

a semiconductor diffusion region;

a transistor for amplifying voltage signals generated in the semiconductor diffusion region;

a transfer gate for transferring photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the semiconductor diffusion region; and

a reset switch for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the semiconductor diffusion region to perform a reset.

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26. (Original) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17, wherein the output means comprises:

a charge-voltage conversion part for converting electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to voltage signals;

signal amplification means for amplifying the voltage signals generated in the charge-voltage conversion part;

charge transfer means for transferring a photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part; and

reset means for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part to perform a reset.

27. (Original) A solid image pickup device, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion part;

a charge-voltage conversion part for converting electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to voltage signals;

signal amplification means for amplifying the voltage signals generated in the charge-voltage conversion part;

charge transfer means for transferring photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and

reset means for applying a predetermined reset voltage to the charge-voltage conversion part to perform a reset,

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wherein the solid image pickup device further comprises a control circuit for control so as to, in a readout period of reading out from the photoelectric conversion part photo-electric charges accumulated in the photoelectric conversion part during one unit of accumulation period, transfer the photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part, and perform a primary readout operation of reading out output signals amplified by the amplification means to a signal output line, and then to reset the charge-voltage conversion part, transfer the photo-electric charges from the photoelectric conversion part to the charge-voltage conversion part and perform a final readout operation of reading out output signals amplified by the amplification means to the signal output line.

28. (Original) The solid image pickup device according to claim 17 or 27, wherein the photoelectric conversion part is an embedded-type photodiode.

29. (Withdrawn) An image pickup system comprising:
a solid image pickup device according to claim 17 or 27;
an optical system for focusing a ray of light to the solid image pickup device; and
a signal processing circuit for processing output signals from the solid image pickup device.

30. (Original) An image pickup system comprising:

a solid image pickup device according to claim 17 or 27;

an optical system for focusing a ray of light to the solid image

pickup device;

a mechanical shutter for determining an exposure time of the solid

image pickup device; and

a signal processing circuit for processing output signals from the

solid image pickup device.
